

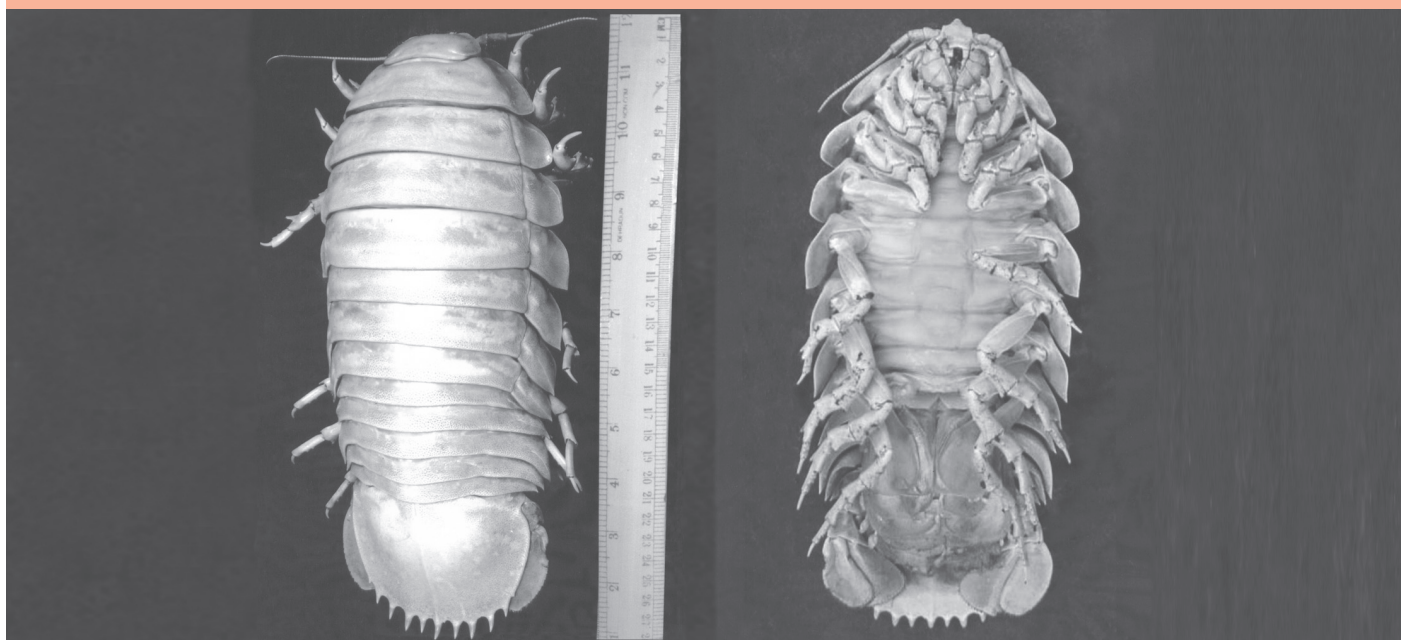
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**1160 Report on the first occurrence of *Bathynomus giganteus*,
a deep sea isopod from the west coast of India**

A deep sea isopod specimen was collected from Cochin Fisheries Harbour, while unloading the catch on 14.03.2006. The giant isopod was caught by a trawler operated at a depth of 520 meters off Ezhimala, Kannur district of Kerala. The specimen was identified as *Bathynomus giganteus* (Fig 1A &B) belonging to the order isopoda, suborder flabellifera and family cirulanidae. The morphometric measure-ments of the specimen (mm) are given below.

1. Total length	280.0
2. Length of head	35.3
3. Length of thorax	174.0
4. Length of last abdominal segment	70.4

5. Maximum breadth	105.4
6. Length of antenna	78.0
7. Length of antennule	20.0
8. Length of anterior walking leg	91.0
9. Length of posterior walking leg	110.0
10. Total weight	655.0 g
11. Number of spines on the last abdominal segment	11

The range of distribution of *Bathynomus giganteus* is Bay of Bengal, Arabian Sea, Gulf of Mexico and the south western Atlantic off Brazil. Its habitat is the sea bottom at a depth ranging from 1200 ft. to 2000 ft. It lives in an area where the light

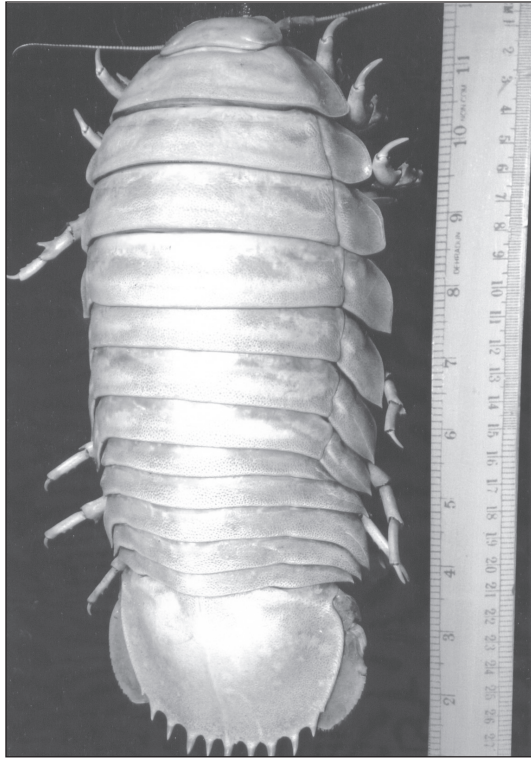


Fig. 1 a *Bathynomus giganteus* (Dorsal view)

penetration is very less and the temperature is extremely cold.

In India it was first reported from the coastal waters of Thoothukudi in Bay of Bengal at a depth of 300 ft. The specimen was having a total length of 260 mm and a maximum breadth of 95 mm. The present report of the occurrence of *Bathynomus giganteus* is for the first time from the West coast of India. The specimen is bigger than the one reported from the east coast. It was reported that *Bathynomus giganteus* grows upto a length of 420 mm (18 inch) and



Fig. 1 b *Bathynomus giganteus* (Ventral view)

attains a weight of 1360 grams (3 pounds)

Bathynomus giganteus is not a fast swimmer and does not migrate to a longer distance in search of food or for the purpose of spawning. Since food is scarce in the habitat, they are adapted to feast or famine. However it is reported that they are carnivores and feed on fish, sponges, small crustaceans, nematode worms and protozoans. They prey on diseased or injured fish and also attack fish that have been caught in the net. *Bathynomus giganteus* is an egg laying animal. The

females are provided with a brood pouch in which the eggs are brooded and the young ones are released. The specimen is currently in display at the museum of

Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute, Kochi.

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